urgings, no less than three successive expeditions (the Sourisseau, 624
Friquegnon and Dussault columns) and two years of difficult and 669
costly operations were necessary to restore order and suppress the Yunnanese bands. The deposition of the Chao-Fa -- applicable both to himself and his heirs -- was decreed in April 1916, and the former principality was converted into a simple "muong." Phra-Ong-Kham died in China in 1923, and when his family offered to make its submission it was given permission to return to Muong-Sing.

2. The Meo rebellion (1919-1921). While these events were M
transpiring the Meos, who lived mainly high up on the peaks of 563
Luang-Prabang and Tran-Ninh (1), had maintained a proper atti- 669 L

1. See above, p. 212. 787

tude even though approached by the Chao-Fa and the /358/ Chinese brigands. Nor had they seemed at first to pay any more attention to the movement which their fellows in Tonkin had just initiated in the basin of the upper Black River.

Continuing to live apart from other races in jealous isolation, they had nevertheless seemed for some time past to be moving towards closer terms with the provincial administration, which had succeeded in interesting them in road projects. But in July 1919 one of the leaders of the Tonkin rebellion who was being pursued by our troops and was called Batchay came to seek refuge among them. From this lair he sent out emissaries whose mission it was to devote themselves to secret propaganda efforts among the Meo groupings of Upper Laos in favor of a king who, "accomplishing the will of Heaven, was to bring them happiness, peace and prosperity." The rumor rapidly circulated among these credulous tribes that a prophecy which had fallen from the sky was summoning all Meos to revolt and form a great independent kingdom with its capital at Dien-Bien-Phu or Muong-Heup. To the accompaniment of incantations and magic formulas, the able-bodied population was called to march against the Laotians, Khas and Annamites and to build the palace of the awaited sovereign.

/359/ In vain did the king of Luang-Prabang send messages to L
the Meo leaders in protest against these absurd rumors. Within a M
few weeks armed bands were formed which began to ransom and 563
pillage the villages of Tran-Ninh, Luang-Prabang and the Houa- 669
Phan. Our militia had to occupy the outpost of Muong-Heup, which

L was attacked on August 15. It repulsed the assaillants, two of which
M were killed and some ten wounded. The Muong-Ngoi outpost was
563 then reinforced by riflemen under the command of Lieutenant
669 Distanti, and detachments led by Laotian leaders scoured the country. On September 23, however, Lieutenant Distanti fell into an ambush and suffered a mortal wound, and in October we committed the error of evacuating Muong-Heup, an action which heightened Batchay's prestige still further and provoked a veritable panic among the terrorized populace.

The matter was becoming serious, and reinforcements had to be sent from Hanoi and Saigon. A military column was organized and placed under the direction of Colonel Angeli, who was able to free the plateau of Xieng-Khouang and part of the Houa-Phan only after fierce battles at Ban-Ban, Bergerie, Ban-Phadeng and Pakkha /360/ (January-May 1920). At the same time attempts had been made to enter into negotiations with the principal rebel leaders so as to open their eyes to the dangers and ordeals into which they were drawing their families. A few submissions were obtained in this manner, but when the rainy season halted all operations Batchay profited from the respite in order to regroup his partisans east of Nam-Ou.

In December Commander Dorey resumed the offensive, and despite the many obstacles in a "land bristling with mountains, sown with ambushes and devoid of all resources" succeeded in driving the Meos "from one entrenched position to the next," harrying them without respite, encircling them and decimating them with such rapidity that a month later all their bands were either destroyed or had surrendered, that Batchay was in flight and abandoned by the last survivors, and that the column could be disbanded in March 1921 (1).

1. Batchay's refuge was not discovered until October 1922. Surprised by Khas in the vicinity of Muong-Heup, he was killed by the latter on November 17.

Thus ended, almost as suddenly as it had broken out, this surprising insurrection which was uniquely due to the fanaticism of skittish and excessively superstitious tribes which were /361/ blindly obedient (like the southern Khas towards the Phou-Mi-Boun) to leaders who imposed on them by practices drawn from the lowest kind of sorcery. It is indeed a proven fact that the Meos had not been exposed to the

influence of any foreign propaganda and that their revolt did not at any time assume the character of an anti-French manifestation. Thus their uprising had no repercussions on the other ethnic groups in Laos, which in spirit and in deed stood behind our repressive measures. L M 563 669

They returned in peace to their agricultural labors (chiefly the cultivation of poppies) in their precipitous solitudes. A special administrative statute gave them the cantonal and communal autonomy which they desired, with no Laotian or Annamite intermediary. No matter how infrequent their contacts with the populations of the valleys and plains, it is quite certain that racial antagonism (exploited by agitators during the revolt) was maintaining a state of mind among their groupings which was suspicious and devoid of friendliness towards the native authorities. The reforms which were put into effect seem to have yielded good results. In the same way, a prudent policy towards the still unsubdued tribes of Lower Laos, one which will avoid direct conflict with their customs /362/ and prejudices, will gradually tame these last representatives of another age whom the opening-up of means of communication will finally incorporate into the larger Indo-Chinese family. L M 563 636 609 178 563

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